

LA's Best Arcade & Gaming Bars

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Jan 21 at 12pm

If you grew up in a time period before the word “Wii” was part of our vernacular, then you remember the original Nintendo and blowing on the bottom of your Mario Brothers game cartridge when the TV screen froze. Now that we’re all grown up, bar arcades, AKA barcades, are quite trendy. And who wouldn’t love them? If I could’ve played Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles while sipping a Mai Tai, maybe I would’ve gotten past level one (probably not). These fun gaming lounges are popping up all over Los Angeles. Here are a few choice ones to check out. Ready player one?



The One Up

This Sherman Oaks gastropub describes itself as “a bizarre love triangle between a neighborhood bar, a sexy lounge, and an ‘80s arcade.” The often-packed bar is filled with arcade games for every type from Frogger to Robotron. Chow down some housemade barbecue potato chips while defeating your friend, lover, or soon-to-be enemy on the Street Fighter Plus console that has every version of Street Fighter. With 400 games available and a plethora of cocktails, being a grown-up playing video games has never been better.

Eighty Two

This hot spot in the Arts District of downtown L.A. is so packed that it’s best to get there before 8 p.m. if you want a good spot. This 21-and-older arcade bar features arcade and pinball games from the ‘70s to the ‘90s. Enjoy the tree-covered patio, DJs, and craft cocktail menu. For pinball enthusiasts, there’s a free pinball league that meets on Tuesdays. And do scrounge up your laundry quarters to play the games (there’s a change machine if you only have bills on you). Sip on the Power Up drink (a cool combo of chocolate rum and cold-brewed coffee) while you defeat your friends as player one.

GameHäus

What this game-board café lacks in alcoholic drinks, it more than makes up for with almost 900 games. Have the best game night ever with friends. The folks at GameHäus have everything stocked from classics like Scrabble and Monopoly, party games like Balderdash, and the popular Settlers of Catan. Be forewarned that when you play Cards Against Humanity, laughing fits are inevitable and your lack of decency is rewarded. For a flat fee of five bucks, you can stay and play as long as you like. The coffee, tea, and munchies menu, including freshly made pies and scones, makes it easy to game all night long.

Blipsy Bar

This K-Town (Koreatown for non-Angelenos) bar is a local favorite. You can find the bar by spotting the neon blue Pac-Man ghost in the window since there's no signage outside. Inside, stiff drinks and Spy Hunter, WWF Superstars, and Donkey Kong await you. The bar and games are cash only so bring lots of quarters (there's a quarter machine on hand, if needed). With 12 arcade games and four pinball machines, this dive bar is less crowded than its barcade counterparts on weeknights.

Neon Retro Arcade

This brand new entry to the bar gaming arena will open on January 30 in the Old Town section of Pasadena. Husband and wife, Mark Guenther and Mia Mazadiego, have 40 gaming consoles, including Pac-Man, Ms. Pac-Man, and Marble Madness. Confession: I once spent an entire summer in fifth grade trying to "beat" Marble Madness. I stayed up until midnight when my thumbs cramped and I was seeing marbles when I closed my eyes. What's cool about this place is that you can pay for an hourly rate (\$20 for two hours) or pay \$30 for unlimited, all-day play. So leave the quarters at home. While this arcade doesn't have a liquor license yet, the couple plans to partner with local eateries to bring food to the gamery.

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